

736. A  
S E R M O N

Occasion'd by the DEATH

Of the R-E-V-E-R-E-N-D

Mr. *Josiah Hargreaves,*

Who suddenly departed this Life, *January 27,*



739-40. *Ætat. 68.*

PREACHED AT

*St. Ives, in Huntingdonshire,*

*JANUARY 30,*

Being the Time of his Funeral.

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*Publiſh'd at the REQUEST of ſome of his  
particular FRIENDS.*

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By *EVAN JONES,* of *Spaldwick*

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N O R T H A M P T O N :

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S E R M O N

Occasion'd by the DEATH of the  
Rev. Mr. *Josiah Hargreaves.*

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I COR. IV. 7.

*But we have this Treasure in  
Earthen Vessels, that the Ex-  
cellency of the Power may  
be of God, and not of us.*

**I** Little thought the first Time I appear'd in  
this Place (which was not long since) that  
the next would be upon such a very so-  
lemn and mournful Occasion as *this!*

BUT the great God, *in whose Hands are all  
our Times and Ways,* hath been pleas'd so to  
order it, that *thus* it is!

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ACCORDINGLY, the Words of holy Writ from which I have (as well as the short Notice I had wou'd allow me) drawn a few Meditations, for the Improvement of the present Occasion, are those which I have now been reading; *But we have this Treasure, &c.*

THIS Chapter consists of three general Parts, viz. the Way and Manner in which St. Paul and his Fellow-Apostles preach'd the Gospel; the Ground and Reason of their so preaching it; and the manifold Afflictions and Sufferings that they endur'd upon the Account of it.

THE Words I have chosen for my Text come under that Part wherein the Apostle declares the Ground and Reason of that artless, open and couragious Manner in which he and his Affociates preached the Gospel.

IN the Words we have observable,

I. THE *Name* that the Apostle gives the Gospel: He calls it *Treasure*-----*We have this Treasure*-----

II. HIS *Description* of the Persons entrusted with it: They are *Earthen Vessels*-----*We have this Treasure in Earthen Vessels*----

III. THE



III. THE *Reason* he assigns why this *Treasure* is put into such *Vessels*: It is that God might have all the *Glory*.-----*We have this Treasure in Earthen Vessels, that the Excellency of the Power may be of God, and not of us.*

I. THEN, we have here observable the *Name* that St. *Paul* ascribes to the Gospel: He calls it *Treasure*-----*We have this Treasure*----

By the Gospel we mean the Word of God, the System of Divine Truths contained in the holy Scriptures; the chief Subject whereof is the Lord Jesus Christ, one *in whom*, as our Apostle tells us, *Coloss. ii. 3. are hid all the Treasures of Wisdom and Knowledge*; so that whatever Wisdom and Knowledge the Sinner wants, as leading to his everlasting Salvation, Christ only is possess'd of, and from him alone must be deriv'd: And therefore the glorious Gospel, as making known to us such an infinitely rich Person, may justly be call'd by the Name of *Treasure*.

It may be also *thus* call'd to point out to us its *Divine Influence*; for, as whatever a *Man's Treasure* is, *Matth. vi. 21. his Heart* is much drawn by; so, the blessed Gospel is that, which, thro' the Spirit, is mightily influential upon the Christian's Heart, whose *Treasure* it is ;

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is: It draws forth his Heart to it, and makes him very highly to esteem it: He values it much more than *Thousands of Gold and Silver*, and greatly *delights in it after the inward Man*.

FARTHER: It may be said to be *Treasure*, to denote the Secrecy of it; in that tho' the true Believer, the Child of God, is made *savingly* acquainted with it, yet as to the *Worldly Wise and Prudent*, from them 'tis *thus* hid: They know nothing of its transforming Power, nothing of its Spirituality, nothing of its Divine Worth and Excellency; and hence in *Matth. xiii. 44.* 'tis spoken of as *Treasure hid in a Field*-----*The Kingdom of Heaven (i. e. the Word of the Kingdom) is like unto Treasure hid in a Field; the which when a Man hath found, he hideth, &c.*

BUT again: The Word or Gospel of Christ may have this Name of *Treasure* given it, to signify its *Security*. *Treasure* (you know) is what Mankind take much Care of; hence, *Acts viii. 27.* we read concerning One of great Authority under *Candace*, Queen of the *Ethiopians*, who had the *Charge of all her Treasure*. And so, in like Manner, the glorious Gospel is a Thing that's taken great Care of, and that even by the Almighty himself, who hath preserv'd it in the Worst of Times, when the wicked Attempts of Men and Devils have been made to corrupt and destroy it; and he will go  
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on still to preserve it; and will punctually fulfil the Promises of it, which are all *Yea, and Amen, in Christ Jesus*: So that the Gospel is such a Treasure *that neither Moth nor Rust can corrupt, nor Thieves take away*: No; 'tis a Gospel that's everlasting; for so 'tis call'd, *Rev. xiv. 6.-----I saw another Angel fly in the Midst of Heaven, having the everlasting Gospel-----*

AND now (by way of Improvement on this Head) seeing that the Gospel is such a Treasure, how shou'd those that are in the Enjoyment of it, be thankful to God for it, and more and more study and search into it? As it shou'd make us thankful, so it shou'd be the Matter of our daily Study and Contemplation. The glorious Things contain'd in it, are what even *the Angels themselves desire to look into*; let us then, in Imitation of them, have the same Desire, and still endeavour after farther Degrees of Gospel-Knowledge; for (as one of the Prophets expresses it) *then shall we know, if we follow on to know*; and therefore, *Solomon*, when speaking of *Christ*, the Gospel's grand Subject, under the Character of *Wisdom*, says, *Prov. ii. 4, 5. If thou seekest her as Silver, and searchest for her, as for hid Treasures; then shalt thou understand the Fear of the Lord, and find the Knowledge of God.*

THUS

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THUS much then for the *first Head*, the *Name* that the Apostle gives to the Gospel : He calls it *Treasure*.

THE next to be consider'd (as observable in the Text) is,

II. THE *Description* of the Persons entrusted with this excellent Treasure : They are *Earthen Vessels*-----*We have this Treasure in Earthen Vessels*-----

WE, *i. e.* " We Apostles and Ministers of the present Day." And, consequently, all other Ministers, their Successors.

THE Ministers of the Gospel then (according to this) are *Earthen Vessels*.

WE'LL consider the Terms distinctly.

FIRST, They are *Vessels* ; which Branch of the *Description* may be expressive,

I. OF their Divine Appointment to the Work in which they are engag'd ; in that Vessels (I need not tell you) are artificial Instruments design'd by the Maker for particular Uses, some for one Use, and some for another : And so the true Ministers of the Gospel are Persons whom the Lord hath appointed to that Work ;



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Work; agreeably to what's said of *Paul*, *Acts ix. 15.* *He is a chosen Vessel unto me, to bear my Name before the Gentiles, and Kings, and the Children of Israel.*

2. **THEIR** being call'd *Vessels* may be also intended to express that they have not all like Endowments, nor are all equally fitted for their sacred Employment; for *Vessels* (we know) are not of an equal Capacity, some being greater, and others less; there are, as we read, *Isaiah xxii. 24.* *Vessels of Cups, and Vessels of Flagons:* So, the Ministers of the Gospel, some are like *Vessels of Cups*, contain but a small Quantity, others like *Vessels of Flagons*, that hold a great deal: Some have greater Gifts, and others less; *every Man as God sees fit.* I Cor. xii. 11.

3. **THEIR** being describ'd as *Vessels* may be expressive likewise of that Purity and Holiness which ought to be in 'em, and appear upon 'em, in Allusion to the *Vessels* of the Temple, which were all consecrated and made holy, insomuch that those *that bare 'em were to be clean.* The Ministers of the Gospel, most certainly, should be holy. If *they* must be *clean* that only *bear the Vessels of the Lord*, much more *those* who are the *Vessels* themselves. Hence, our holy Apostle, when writing to *Timothy*, amongst other cautionary Directions, advises him to keep himself pure both from

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Heresy in Doctrine, and Impiety in Life, 2 Tim. ii. 20, 21. ---- *In a great House there are not only Vessels of Gold and Silver, but also of Wood and of Earth, and some to Honour, and some to Dishonour. If a Man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a Vessel unto Honour, sanctify'd and meet for the Master's Use, and prepared unto every good Work.*

THUS then for the *first Branch* of the Description: Ministers are *Vessels*.

WE proceed to consider,

*SECONDLY*, that they are *Earthen Vessels*.

AND thus they may be characteriz'd,

(1.) BECAUSE, like others, *they are made of the Earth*. They, as well as their Hearers, as St. Paul speaks, 2 Cor. v. 1. have Bodies that are but *an earthly House of Tabernacle*: They're *Partakers of Flesh and Blood*, as other Men are; God having, in Compassion to his People, chosen such to speak to 'em, that so their *Terrors might not make them afraid*; according to what *Elihu* says, Job xxxiii. 6, 7.

(2.) THEY may be said to be *Earthen Vessels* upon the Account of *that little Esteem in which the Men of the World are apt to hold 'em*: They despise 'em and slight 'em, and look upon 'em

'em as mean and contemptible; for tho', by virtue of that Honour their Lord hath put upon 'em, in committing the rich Treasure of the Gospel to 'em, *they are the precious Sons of Zion comparable to fine Gold*, yet *are they esteemed as Earthen Pitchers, the Work of the Hands of the Potter*, as 'tis express'd, *Lam. iv. 2.*

(3.) MINISTERS, even the best of 'em, are *subject to many sinful Infirmities*, as well as other Men; and on that Account also may be represented as *Earthen Vessels*. 'Tis said of the Prophet *Elias*, *James v. 17. that he was a Man subject to like Passions as we are*; and so likewise, as in *Acts xiv. 15.* it may be said of all the Ministers of the New Testament; for, as *John the Baptist* takes Notice, 'tis our blessed Lord only, *who cometh from Above, and is above all*, that is perfectly pure, but *he that is of the Earth*, as every Minister, by Nature, is, *is earthy, and speaketh of the Earth*, *John iii. 31.* O Sirs! *we*, as well as our *People*, too much manifest that *we are of the Earth*; our *Liquor* too much favours of the Vessel; Satan, like a cursed Enemy, stirs up the Remainders of the old Man in our Souls, and, thro' his subtle Temptations, causes us, *sometimes*, to mix the Wine with Water, I mean, the pure Doctrines of Christ with Man's Wisdom, and makes us so to shew our own sinful Passions and Humours, as that we plainly appear to be but *Earthen Vessels*.

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(4.) THOSE with whom the Gospel is intrusted are *frail and mortal*, and must die as well as others; and for this Reason also may very properly be said to be *Earthen Vessels*. *Your Fathers, where are they? And the Prophets, do they live for ever?* No; God's Prophets and Ministers die as other Men do; *the earthly House of their Tabernacle must be dissolved; the Pitcher, will, assuredly, at last, be broken at the Fountain, and the Dust, as 'tis said, Eccles. xii. 6, 7. return to the Earth as it was.*

YOU (my Friends) of this Church and Congregation, by repeated Experiences, know this to be too true. God has, in the Death of one and another of your Ministers, convinc'd you that they were but *Earthen Vessels*; and more especially in the Death of your late Pastor, whom, the last Lord's-Day, you (I suppose) expected to have seen and heard in this Place; and, doubtless, he himself, when he went to bed, on the Saturday Night, design'd and expected it: But, alas! the *Earthen Vessel* was very suddenly and unexpectedly dash'd to Pieces, and now, for a while, must lie amongst the *broken Pots*; tho' the Soul (as we have no Reason to doubt) is, in Heaven, *as the Wings of a Dove cover'd with Silver, and her Feathers with yellow Gold*; to allude to that Passage, *Psal. lxviii. 13.*

AND

AND thus now we have consider'd the Reasons why the Ministers of the Gospel are describ'd as *Vessels*, even Vessels of Earth, or, *Earthen Vessels*.

THE *Application* of this Head take as follows.

I.] ARE the Ministers of the Gospel *Vessels*, *Vessels* that God hath form'd and made, *Vessels* that are of various and different Capacities, and *Vessels*, that, agreeable to the Nature and Design of their Use, should be pure and clean? *Let those then that are in the Ministry, be thankful to God for making them such Vessels of Honour; and let those that are large Vessels not despise them that are less; and those that are but small, not envy the Gifts of those that excell 'em, nor be discourag'd at the Smallness of their own Capacity: But let all endeavour to be found faithful, and, as Spittitual Vessels, know how to possess themselves in Sanctification and Honour; and not like Eli's Sons, make themselves vile, and cause the Sacrifices of the Lord to be abhorr'd.*

AND as for those that are our People, let *them* expect no more from *us* than from *Vessels*. You shou'd remember that we are but *Vessels*. We can only give out what we *have receiv'd from the Lord*; we can but *make known*,  
according



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according to the Measure given us, *the Grace of the Gospel*; but we cannot bestow it upon you, we cannot work it in you; this is the Work of God, and not our's. Look not therefore at Ministers, as tho' they cou'd speak to your Heart: No; 'tis God that must do this; 'tis he that must reach the Heart, and enrich it with the Treasure of the Gospel that we have put into *us*, and that we preach unto *you*.

BUT in the next Place,

2.] ARE Ministers (as we've heard) such Vessels of *Earth*? This then shou'd teach 'em to have low Thoughts of themselves, and to take heed of smiting one against another, and often to think of their being broken and laid aside, and to act and prepare accordingly.

AND from hence also let their *People* learn to be tender, and careful of 'em, being always mindful that they are but *frail* Vessels: And they shou'd likewise, from the Consideration of their Frailty, be quickned to make a diligent Improvement of their Ministry, whilst their Usefulness continues, and their Lives last, remembering that as they are so frail and brittle, they may soon be disabled from their Work, or dash'd to Pieces by the Stroke of Death. 'Tis but a short Time, at the longest, that Ministers can be with their People. We are  
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all dying Men, and (as one well expresses it) whilst the Word of Life is in our Mouths, many times Death is in our Faces. O that you might therefore rightly improve our Ministrations, whilst you are in the Enjoyment of 'em !

HAVING thus then finish'd our *second General*, we now pass on to the next ; and that is,

III. AND lastly, the *Reason* assign'd, why this Treasure of the Gospel is put into such Earthen Vessels as the Ministers and Dispensers of it are : It is that the great God might have all the Praise ----- *We have this Treasure* (says the Apostle) *in Earthen Vessels, that the Excellency of the Power may be of God, and not of us : That the Excellency, i. e. the Greatness of the Power, the awakening, convincing, quickening, Heart-changing Power and Efficacy of the Gospel, the Word of God, may be, that is to say, appear to be of himself, and not of us Men ; and therefore to God all the Glory shou'd be ascrib'd.*

THE grand Design of the blessed Gospel is to lead us to the true Fear of God, and to glorify his great and awful Name ; and in order to his being the more glorify'd, he employs those that are but weak and mean Instruments, in the preaching and propagating of this Gospel : Thus, for Instance, the first Preachers and Propagators

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Propagators of it were ; and so, for the most part, the Ministers of it now are ; for *not many mighty, not many noble are call'd to this Work : But God hath chosen the foolish Things of the World, and those that are but weak, that so he that glorieth, shou'd glory only in the Lord.*

THE Gospel is indeed very powerful : 'Tis call'd, *Rom. i. 16. the Power of God to Salvation.* 'Tis powerful, but then 'tis God that makes it so ; for what is the Preaching of the Gospel in itself ? Alas ! 'tis a very unlikely Means to effect any great Matters, as unlikely as *Gideon's Soldiers Lamps* in the Earthen Pitchers were to terrify the Enemy and discomfit 'em ; but yet these Lamps in the Pitchers, by vertue of God's Power, did do it, as in *Judges vii. 20, 21.* (to which some think the Apostle alludes in the Text) So, by the Power of God, the Gospel, in those Earthen Vessels, Christ's Ministers, is made effectual, however insufficient in itself, or in its Dispensers, *to the pulling down of the strong Holds of Sin and Satan.*

O ! WHAT great Things hath the Dispensation of the Gospel, through the Power of God, done in this World ! How have the Great Ones of the Earth, the Stubborn and Rebellious, been made to submit to it ! Such a Power hath gone forth with the Gospel, that they have not been able to withstand it, but have fall'n down before it, and yielded up themselves

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themselves to it, giving all Glory to God in the highest. O! what a Revenue of Honour hath God brought to himself by the Gospel; by strengthening his Ministers in the Preaching of it, and by granting them Success in their Labours!

AND what tho' they are frail, dying Creatures, yet, as they die, and, like broken Vessels, are laid aside, he raises up others to stand in their Room, and commits the same Gospel to them, as to their Predecessors, so speaking in 'em, and by 'em, as to get to himself, by their Labours, an *everlasting Name*.

WHEREFORE (as an Improvement of this Head) how shou'd we, in order to our glorifying of God, pray to him, that we might, more and more, feel this Divine Power, in and by the Gospel, operating on our Hearts, and in our Lives.

O! THAT we might find this *Excellency of Power* going along with the Gospel of Christ, that so he *may divide the Spoil* and possess the Throne in our Souls; that our Souls may be sav'd, and that God may have all the Glory!

THUS then we have gone over and consider'd the several Parts of the Text.



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AND now, I apprehend, 'twill be expected that I should say something with respect to your Reverend deceas'd Pastor (whose Corpse lies here before us.)

ACCORDINGLY; as to him our dear Brother, the Vessel now broken and laid aside, he was (agreeably to the Character I have had of him) a Person well descended, and well educated: His Father was a worthy Minister of the Establish'd Church: He was himself a Gentleman of good Learning, without any Ostentation: He was One eminent for Humility, Patience, and Self-denial: He was a Lover of all good Men, however different from himself in Opinion; yea, he lov'd his very Enemies (if any he had) and heartily pray'd for 'em: He was One that bewail'd the Sins and Vices of the Times: He was slow to Anger; being a mild, tho' faithful, Reprover: He was an *Healer of Breaches, and a Restorer of Paths to dwell in*: He was (as appear'd by his Discourses, in all his Visits) so spiritual and holy, that it was evident his Heart was in Heaven, tho' his Body on Earth: So that, in short, tho' an *Earthen* Vessel, yet (according to this Account) he was as honourable an one, as most in the Lord's House; and tho' now by Death broken to Pieces, shall, hereafter, be made whole again, and for ever shine, in the House Above, as a Vessel of Glory.

I SHALL

I SHALL conclude with a few Words by way of Advice to you his Friends.

AND here, I think, I need not caution you against sorrowing, as Persons without Hope, for him who hath fall'n asleep in Jesus: Sorrow, indeed, you can't but have, but, surely, not an hopeless one, for such a good Man, and faithful Minister of Christ, as *Mr. Hargreaves* was: His Death, 'tis true, was very sudden; but what then? Sudden Death, to the Believer, is but sudden Glory. And, besides, herein God answer'd his Desire, which was that he might feel as little Pain, as possible, in dying; he was often afraid of the Pains of Death; and but few of these he cou'd have, he not being apprehensive, unless for a Moment, that Death was executing his Office upon him. Let the Consideration of this then serve to moderate your Grief, and to dry up your Tears, for him; as well as to encourage your Confidence in God, if you have committed the Keeping of your Souls to him thro' Christ.

As for the afflicted Widow, and *her* who is now left *fatherless*, let them trust also in that merciful and gracious God, who hath promis'd to be *an Husband to the Widow*, and *a Father to the Fatherless*.

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AND as for you, the now destitute Church, let me exhort you to keep together in Love, Peace and Unity, and to be much in Prayer to God, that you may rightly improve this awful Dispensation of his Providence; and that he wou'd be pleas'd to raise up for you another Pastor, even one after his own Heart, to feed you with Spiritual Knowledge and Understanding, one that shall be a Vessel meet for the Master's Use, and fit for your Service, as that faithful Minister was, whom you have now lost.

AND O! that we might all of us, by this sudden Stroke, be put in Mind of our own Mortality, remembering that our Life on Earth is but as a Vapour that appeareth only for a little while, and then vanisheth away. May we, every one, be always upon our Watch! according to those Words of our blessed Lord, Mark xiii. from Verse the 34th ----- The Son of Man is as a Man taking a far Journey, who left his House, and gave Authority to his Servants, and to every Man his Work, and commanded the Porter to watch. Watch ye therefore (for ye know not when the Master of the House cometh; at Even, or at Midnight, or at the Cock-crowing, or in the Morning) lest coming suddenly, he find you sleeping. And what I say unto you, I say unto all, Watch.

Now

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Now, to God the Father, to God the Son,  
and to God the Holy Ghost, be everlasting  
Praises ascribed. *Amen*



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